



## **Background to the Crisis of Research and Graduate Studies.**

### **December 2018**

We, your PSU-AAUP, became aware of staff reductions in RGS and responded swiftly.

We submitted what is known as a “Demand to Bargain” — in this case, to bargain the possible effects of staff reductions on the faculty and academic professionals connected to the research enterprise. The administration has the right to reduce staffing, but as faculty we have the legal right to bargain the effect of such action.

Staff reductions in RGS can have very significant impacts on principal investigators, their ability to obtain and support grants, their workload, and their promotion and tenure reviews. They also have an impact on the workload and satisfaction of our colleagues, the academic professionals who support PI’s at all stages of grant administration.

### **Spring 2019**

In spring 2019, we learned that then VP of Research and Graduate Studies, Mark McLellan, who has since left PSU, was developing a plan to reorganize RGS.

PSU-AAUP was naturally suspicious of the idea of “reorganization.”

In the context of significant staff reductions, and the many concerns we had received from principal investigators (PIs) and department research administrators (DRAs), we were apprehensive that the proposed “reorganization” was a pretext for further decimating the support for research at PSU. PSU-AAUP met with leadership from the Office of Research and Graduate Studies in late Spring to learn more about their plan. We got a walk-through their schematic reorganization plans, which reinforced our initial skepticism. There were three main concerns:

1. The lack of detail in the plan
2. The unsubstantiated promises of increased “efficiency”
3. The fact that the reorganization plan was produced without substantive input from the principal investigators or the department research administrators .

But we needed to confirm this skepticism, so we reached out to PIs and DRAs.

## Summer 2019

In summer 2019, we conducted focus groups with principal investigators and DRAs, asking them to review the RGS reorganization plan. ***The overwhelming response from the research stakeholder groups was that the plan if implemented would hurt research at PSU. Furthermore, most of what was wrong with the plan could have been corrected with proper input from principal investigators and DRAs.*** Focus group participants also shared that staff reductions in RGS were already having a significant negative impact. Several PIs raised questions about their future without adequate support at PSU: Will I continue to submit grant proposals? Can I continue my research agenda at PSU?

News of these focus groups must have gotten out. On August 16, 2019, Mark McLellan, VP of Research and Graduate Studies, wrote an email to faculty informing that

“Some of you may have seen documents circulating that are associated with the reorganization of the Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA) unit within Research & Graduate Studies. This reorganization is no longer being pursued, and thus any associated documents are not relevant and should not be distributed.”

Mark McLellan left PSU shortly thereafter, and the administration finally understood that reorganization without PI and DRA input was a mistake. Jason Podrabsky, the interim VP of research, reported in a November 13 campus email that RGS has concluded a process of getting campus input.

As of today, DRAs have continued to leave PSU, and AAUP has continued to urge the administration to hire and re-staff RGS. We do not understand why RGS, to the detriment of both PIs and DRAs, has failed to fill the numerous vacant support positions. We hope the administration will listen to the faculty and staff at PSU and show us that research is a priority at PSU by supporting RGS.